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American Charities. A Study in Philanthropy and Economics.

By AMOS G. WARNER, Ph.D., Professor of Economics and Social Science in the Leland Stanford Jr. University. New York, T. Y. Crowell & Co. — 430 pp.

Thirty years ago one would not have thought that philanthropy and economics could have any dealings with each other. As then generally regarded, political economy was barely human, and the farthest possible from humane. To pity was the first function of humanity; to profit, the business of economics in practice. At the present day, however, it is next to impossible to keep philanthropy and economics apart in any discussion of social affairs.

From the sub-title of Professor Warner's book one might expect philanthropic conduct and feeling to be treated co-equally with the economic interests of society. But we find on examination that the main title means that neither philanthropy nor economics is treated here, but that these two polar impulses—the philanthropic and the economic—define the limiting points of survey within which an excellent study of pauperism in the United States is made. The causes, the classes, the revenues and the relief systems of American pauper life comprise the four parts of this very compactly written book. There are thirty-three tables of statistics, most of them explained in the body of the text. The author takes creditable care to interpret these figures so as to mislead no careful reader as to the importance to be attached to them. Most of the chapters are prefaced by a condensed paragraph of bibliography. The tone of the writer is none too confident, nor too critical, yet is healthfully hopeful.

The methods and the materials of such a book are of great interest to the student of social science. Yet the author seems to have had the administrative interests mainly in mind throughout its preparation. The classification of causes of poverty which Dr. Warner outlines in a schedule of eighteen different influences, under the two divisions of subjective and objective, would be improved, I think, if the divisional heads were cut off. Personality and conditions of social existence are the only two scientific grounds from which sociological conditions can safely be considered. This is the virtual assumption underlying the exceptionally well-digested chapters (III, IV) on individual and social degeneration, as the ulterior conditions of pauperism and dependence. The theoretical portion of the book closes with a chapter on "Charity and Human Selection." I am not quite sure what sociological postulates

are taken for granted throughout this discussion of pauper phenomena; but I gather that the result — pauperism — arises out of the conditions of individual and social degeneration, and that back of all this lies the dominating process of “human selection.”¹

The eight chapters in Part II on “Dependent Classes” contain the gist of the book as an analytic study of existing conditions, apart from the financial aspects of the problem. For the American almshouse the author has little good to say. Three evils are pointed out as fatal to its efficiency: inadequate classification of inmates, laxness of admission and discharge, lack of a work-test. This view, I think, is historically defective. Without denying the full pertinency of this negative criticism and the fact of many disgraceful abuses — and no American institution has escaped its share of abuses — the almshouse system in the older states, considered apart from its connection with cities for whose use it was never really intended, has not by any means failed in its legitimate function — the care of the worthy poor. Practically all adverse criticism has been based on administrative perversions of the system, which have turned the almshouse proper into an asylum for the insane, a den of dissolutes and a tramp-trap. This condition, together with the dependence of the almshouse upon the local magistracy under the fee-system of commitments, has gone far enough to break down one of the soundest of American institutions — the county almshouse conducted on an agricultural basis. The testimony of experience, particularly of municipal and other supervisory experience, is arrayed against outdoor relief. Six states, however, spent over two and one-half millions in out-relief in one year, so that there must be another side to the question. Wider inquiry will no doubt show that the *system* of relief is not the real source of defective administrative results, but rather the *social conditions* which create and sustain relief-systems.

On the unemployed, the conclusion is reached by Dr. Warner that relief as a remedy in trade depressions should be given after due investigation, on a productive basis as far as possible, and through work which might be done at low rates on business principles. With the homeless poor, the remedy of experience lies in the indeterminate sentence in the house of correction for habitual vagrants and drunkards, in the way of which stands our “infamous system of county jails.” For the ordinary wanderer there is really no remedy save the lodging-house, the work-yard and investigation. Labor colonies and vagrancy are carefully examined and results summed

¹ I would suggest *selective survival* as a safer term for this use.

up; though I find no reference to the experiments in Australia, whose kindred social situation ought to make her experience more directly helpful to us than that of continental European communities. The chapter on dependent children is a healthful piece of exposition, showing the decided advantage of getting children into family keeping, as against the pernicious system of wholesale rearing in institutions.

No portion of this book is more timely than Part III, on "Philanthropic Financiering," treating of public charities, private charities, endowments, and subsidies to private charities. Part IV, on "Supervision, Organization and Betterment of Charities," treats mostly of methods and more recently developed features in organization. The chapter (XIX) on the organization of charities is probably the best study to be had on those voluntary agencies which in the larger cities have come to the rescue and the reformation of the older systems of relief within the past fifteen years.

As a survey of American charities the book deals too exclusively with the conditions from the side of the few great cities, leaving comparatively out of account the population of the vast rural domains and the smaller towns in which conditions and methods, as well as results, often teach a different lesson. On this account one great cause of poverty seems to have entirely escaped the writer's attention, namely, the necessary loss to personal capacity by the transfer from rural to urban conditions of life, especially in the case of the young, but generally of all ages. It is not a collapse, but rather what geologists would call a "fault"—continuity on a somewhat lower moral plane, by a let-down through absence of sustaining social conditions. Comte noted this as a preëminent fact. It is not lubricity; nor is it disregard of family ties; it is the inevitable outcome of social transplantation. This sociological law of "personal discount" incident upon circulation in a new social medium, taken in connection with the strong urban movement, would explain a vast amount of pauperism in cities which the author's analysis (page 28) does not seem to include. He deals almost wholly with conditions in twelve or fifteen American cities only, nearly all of which have a population of a quarter of a million each. The other 3700 cities and villages in the United States, having populations from over 200,000 down to 1000, doubtless have evolved much valuable experience that equals, if it does not exceed, in scientific importance that of the dozen leading cities for whose experience the work speaks so ably. In short, the author's treatment of the broad subject of American

charities, while scientifically sound as far as it goes, is logically defective because it excludes from treatment too large a portion of the actual content of the subject. For municipal pauperism or charity comprises a subject of quite recent development compared with the older historical conditions. It is too much the habit of the times to write and reason about things American much as the English tourist does — as if this country had little in it except a score of cities connected by railroads running through nowhere. Dr. Warner deserves thanks for what he has done in this volume, but he has only touched the vast theme of American charities in a few badly infected spots.

JOHN FRANKLIN CROWELL.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

Natural Rights. A Criticism of Some Political and Ethical Conceptions. By DAVID G. RITCHIE, A.M. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co.; New York, Macmillan & Co., 1895. — xvi, 300 pp.

Professor Ritchie's work conforms very faithfully to the purpose which he says animated its production, namely, "to expose confusions, to set those people thinking who can be induced to think." No more promising field is to be found for the writer whose aim is the exposure of confusions than the literature of "natural rights." Of all the opportunities offered Mr. Ritchie has made excellent use. The spirit in which he takes up his subject is broad and philosophical; his method of treatment is clear and logical; and in his style the lapses from dignity are far less numerous than in some of his earlier writings.

The plan of the work presents, first, a general historical and critical treatment of the theory of natural rights, and second, a detailed discussion of particular natural rights. Under the first head, the history of the theory and the history of the idea of "nature" in law and politics are accurately and suggestively reviewed. The mere colorless narratives are fatal to the creeds which *a priori* thinkers have based upon the terms involved. After what seems a superfluously elaborate chapter on "Rousseau and Rousseauism," and an excellent analysis and classification of the different senses in which the term "nature" appears in philosophy, Professor Ritchie, in answering the question "What determines Rights?" exposes the underlying principle of his own philosophy. He advocates the doctrine of "evolutionary utilitarianism." "Natural rights" he concedes a philosophical sig-